

Risk assessment and risk management by police

Principle 4. Underpinning the processes with an outcome-focused approach

Expected result: Regular monitoring of reported cases of intimate partner violence should better ensure victims' safety and keep perpetrators accountable.

Recommendations for improving outcome-focused management

Implement routine monitoring of victim safety.

Monitor perpetrator behaviour (reoffending, compliance with protection orders, attendance at perpetrator programmes, etc.).

Establish links between police, victim support services and perpetrator programmes where possible, to ensure a focus on victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

Assign appropriate significance to victims' assessments of risk.

The processes of risk management must be underpinned by a consistent focus on the main purposes of risk management: victim safety and reduced reoffending. When these critical outcomes of increased safety for victims and reduced reoffending by perpetrators are explicit, police officers understand the rationale for risk assessment and related risk management activity. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be built accordingly so that each individual officer is clear about their role and can communicate it to victims, perpetrators and partner agencies.

Focusing on outcomes helps police guard against risk management becoming a 'tick-box exercise' (i.e. monitoring officers' adherence to processes rather than the impacts of those activities on individual victims and perpetrators). Monitoring processes such as the timely completion of risk assessment checklists must be complemented by the monitoring of risk management strategies to ensure that safety outcomes for victims are improved (116).

The routine monitoring of victim safety can be facilitated through working with local victim services to collect feedback from victims; create follow-up mechanisms to ask victims if they feel safer following police intervention; establish if reoffending is occurring that is unreported to the police; measure breaches of protection orders; monitor attendance and completion of perpetrator programmes; etc. Police must collaborate with victim services as well as perpetrator programmes to ensure the safety of the victim.

To promote positive outcomes for victims, police must encourage victims to express their own views about their risk of further harm, and these should significantly inform the risk management actions that are developed in response. For example, if the victim is convinced that the perpetrator is unlikely to comply with an emergency barring order, other arrangements should be considered, such as referral to a shelter and, when mandatory, arrest for the perpetrator. When setting bail conditions, if the victim expresses concern that the perpetrator is likely to kidnap her children, a protection order forbidding contact by the perpetrator with the children may be appropriate.